

**MINUTES OF THE MILLVILLE
TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR & TELECONFERENCE WORKSHOP
November 24, 2020 (7:00 p.m.)**

In attendance were Mayor Steve Maneri, Deputy Mayor Ronald Belinko, Treasurer Sharon Brienza, Secretary Barbara Ryer, Council Member Peter Michel, Town Manager Debbie Botchie (via Webinar), and Town Clerk Matt Amerling.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Steve Maneri called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

All Council members were present.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- A.** Discuss and possible vote on Millville Volunteer Fire Company (MVFC) request for grant funds based on the amount the Town has collected during this period to go toward the purchase of a fourth ambulance. *Synopsis:* On June 9, 2015, Town Council approved Resolution 16-01, which added an impact fee of \$500 per any new commercial and residential construction within the Town. These monies are put into a grant for the MVFC's fire/ambulance services. The funds are to only be used for outdated capital items used in the MVFC's daily operations or to purchase capital items which enhance operations. The funds shall not be used for salary expenses, including budgeted base salaries, overtime and bonuses.

Secretary Barbara Ryer stated she sees in the letter from the Millville Volunteer Fire Company (MVFC) they are requesting eighty-thousand dollars (\$80,000.00) in monetary grant assistance from the Town to go towards a new ambulance and Ms. Ryer thinks it's a great thing because the MVFC does a lot for our Town. Town Manager Debbie Botchie stated last year, the MVFC requested monies to go towards their new vehicle, which the Town granted, at the cost of ninety-thousand dollars (\$90,000.00), and this year, the MVFC supplied all of their paid invoices, which added up to a little over three-hundred-sixty-thousand dollars (\$360,000.00). Ms. Botchie stated she notified the MVFC they could be granted the eighty-thousand dollars (\$80,000.00) and it could go toward the new ambulance, so they decided to apply for that amount; and the Town does have all of the paid invoices. Deputy Mayor Ronald Belinko stated he thinks the Town is very fortunate to have a positive relationship with the MVFC and Mr. Belinko doesn't think most residents don't know how fortunate they are to have such professional, outstanding fire and emergency personnel there. Mr. Belinko stated he recommends to move forward. Ms. Ryer stated she agrees with everything Mr. Belinko said, and the MVFC is much appreciated. Mayor Maneri stated as a resident of this Town, he gives his appreciation to the MVFC because during this difficult time, they are there and haven't slowed down; and the Town is very lucky to have such a great fire company. Treasurer Sharon

Brienza stated the Town is very lucky to have such a professional organization to represent our Town.

Mr. Belinko motioned to approve the eighty-thousand dollars (\$80,000.00) in monetary grant assistance to the MVFC. Ms. Ryer seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

- B.** Discuss and possible vote on closing of Town meetings in the Council chambers and holding meetings virtually, as well as increasing Town Hall cleanings, and closing of Town events & park facilities due to new COVID restrictions.

Ms. Ryer stated she is in favor of closing the Council meetings to the public and holding the meetings virtually, just as was done when the Town was on lock-down back in April and May. Ms. Ryer stated the Town meetings don't have a high amount of traffic when it comes to attendance, and it's a lot of added expense of having to clean if even just one (1) person attends a meeting. Ms. Ryer stated everybody's safety should be the number one (1) concern. Mayor Maneri asked how much it would be for each cleaning. Ms. Botchie stated what it has cost the Town in the past is one-hundred-fifty dollars (\$150.00) for the entire complex, so Ms. Botchie is thinking that after Council and Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z) meetings, the Town would have the Council chambers cleaned and she's thinking it should be a minimum of fifty dollars (\$50.00). Ms. Botchie stated she would also like to request every other week cleanings for the administrative building and the bathrooms the Delaware State Police (DSP) utilize; and she thinks it would be under one-hundred-fifty dollars (\$150.00) as well. Ms. Ryer asked if the fees would be reimbursable. Ms. Botchie stated yes. Ms. Brienza stated she agrees the building should be closed but she has concerns regarding the public hearings the Town will be having as Ms. Brienza doesn't think a public hearing with developers can be held via a webinar. Ms. Ryer asked about having the public come in only during public hearings, but keeping regular meetings as webinar attendance only. Ms. Brienza stated the problem with having people come in for public hearings is now (under the new restrictions) only eight (8) people can come in. Ms. Ryer stated yes, we can't change that as it's an order from the Governor. Ms. Brienza stated she thinks of having meetings at the park community building but she's not sure of the capacity numbers. Town Clerk Matt Amerling stated if Council does decide to have meetings at the community building, the Town would have to purchase more microphones and have it set up logistically to hold webinars over there. Mr. Belinko stated he understands Ms. Brienza's concern; however, when there is a majority of organizations and municipalities holding virtual teleconferences for public hearings and meetings, we have to be thinking of everyone's safety and with a webinar, everyone will be given the opportunity to speak at a public hearing. Mr. Belinko stated he knows it's not ideal and we're all making sacrifices, but the safety of the community is paramount. Mr. Belinko stated to have a limited number of people in any setting – and we don't know what will happen with cases after this weekend – it just adds up to looking out for everyone's safety. Ms. Brienza stated she agrees safety is the most important thing.

Ms. Botchie stated the Town Hall Council chambers have a maximum capacity of eight (8) people now, and that's just the audience members. Ms. Botchie stated if the meeting is a public hearing, Council knows each item for review will have the applicant, their developer, their attorney and their engineer in attendance, so that is four (4) people right there who take up the

eight (8)-person maximum, and only four (4) residents will be able to attend in person. Ms. Botchie stated if the meeting has two (2) public hearings, that will double the amount of attendees for the applicant, making it eight (8), which will take up the entire maximum allowance, and none of the general public would be allowed entry. Ms. Botchie stated as we've seen in the past, the Town's public hearings have not been well-attended both in person in chambers or via teleconference/webinar. Ms. Botchie stated the public does have the opportunity to listen and speak during the webinar, but they also have the opportunity as soon as Mr. Amerling posts the notice on the website and in the newspaper to see all the plans; and they can also send in written comments which will be addressed during the meeting. Ms. Botchie stated it doesn't matter to her whether they have meetings in the chambers or not, but her concern was for Council to allow her to have the chambers cleaned after each and every meeting due to the fact of the rise in COVID cases. Ms. Botchie stated on the administrative side, the Town is going to start to accept credit card payments for any license, permit, or tax payments; and the Town is working on it "as we speak." Ms. Botchie stated it will help to reduce the number of people coming into Town Hall. Ms. Botchie stated the Town is also looking into pricing for what the City of Lewes has done, which is installing a service window, and it will also alleviate the one-on-one contact since there will be a window separating the employee from the visitor. Council Member Peter Michel stated, regarding whether to keep the meetings open for the public to physically attend, he agrees with Ms. Brienza the meetings should be open. Ms. Brienza stated after hearing Ms. Botchie's explanation, it doesn't make sense to have the meetings open for the public to physically attend if the applicants will take up the entire maximum capacity. Ms. Brienza stated she thinks the Town is better off doing the meetings virtually. Mayor Maneri stated he would like Ms. Botchie to advise Town Code & Building Official Eric Evans to add more closing signs for the Town park since a lot of the signs blew away, as well as putting up more tape. Ms. Botchie stated she thinks the Town needs to invest in putting up larger signs.

Mr. Belinko motioned to approve of putting a hold on Town meetings having public in-person attendance and to hold the meetings for the public virtually. Ms. Brienza seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0. Mayor Maneri called for a five-minute recess for Council to look at the new MVFC ambulance.

5. CITIZENS' PRIVILEGE

Ms. Sally Griffin, of Huntington Street, stated she won't re-read her letter to Council since they have each been given a copy, but she will state this is a coexistence issue between wildlife and people. Ms. Griffin stated we're creating a perfect habitat for Canada Geese, and a lot of people aren't used to having a lot of wildlife around, and don't understand the ramifications, which starts a series of complaints and concerns. Ms. Griffin stated rather than carrying on with the current modus operandi (M.O.) of putting in a stormwater management pond and mowing the lawn around it, Ms. Griffin would like to see more natural habitat changes if people don't want the geese. Ms. Griffin stated she personally likes them, but she knows she's not in the majority, so she wants the developers to stop creating a problem between people and the wildlife. Ms. Griffin stated there are ways to fix it and she thinks it just takes a little more input technically on the landscaping plan. Ms. Griffin stated this is why she would like people to consider when

they're reviewing the plans before they go to Council, to take this all into consideration. Council thanked Ms. Griffin for all the information she provided.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING – TOWN COUNCIL WEBINAR MEETING, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2020

Ms. Brienza stated her wishes to everyone for a happy Thanksgiving.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Brienza motioned to adjourn at 7:48 p.m. Ms. Ryer seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Amerling, Town Clerk